

democracy, and what it means for kids of all different backgrounds to come together in a public education system that is guaranteed by this country. The dangerous views of this nominee, Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education—who has said repeatedly she will not protect the investments we have made, but rather has the philosophy that we should take money away from our public education students and put it to vouchers for private schools—will undermine our whole entire democracy. It is why we have heard across this country from so many parents and teachers and students and grandparents and business leaders who are urging Senators from every State to vote no on this nominee.

Certainly we can do better. Certainly the last election was not about sending our K-12 and higher education system into chaos, certainly not at a time when one of the most important things people care about is the stability of our economy, the ability to get a job. Fundamental to that is being able to know you can go to a school, no matter where you are or where you live or how much money you have, and get a good education. We need to keep that, and no one wants to send that system into chaos at this time. That is why people are speaking out.

As I mentioned earlier today, I have heard from thousands of people in my home State who have contacted me with concerns about this nomination of Betsy DeVos to be the Secretary of Education. An overwhelming number of them are people who have spent time in our classrooms with our kids; that is, our teachers. Many of them have spent decades in public schools dedicating their own lives to helping our children learn in school districts of all different sizes, and those teachers deserve a voice today.

So I thought I would take a few minutes to tell my colleagues a little bit about what I am hearing and why they believe we should oppose Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education.

I heard from a teacher from my hometown of Bothell, WA, who wrote me and said that public education is the basis of equality for all students in this country. Our Founding Fathers recognized the importance of having educated citizens and the need to provide it for all of our children. Education for profit doesn't work. And we need to do what we can to make sure we fight privatization of our education system.

I heard from another woman in central Washington who works with low-income students. As she noted, taking title I funding and putting it toward private schools will be devastating to small communities. She is echoing what I am hearing from rural communities across my State and what I am hearing from many other Senators who have talked to me about what they are hearing from rural communities in their States.

From Seattle, I heard from an educator who told me that she wanted to see

fellow educators—or at least people with some experience in our public schools—running this Department. That is why she opposes Betsy DeVos—no experience.

A retired teacher from Mercer Island asked me to oppose this nomination. She has spent 37 years teaching children in our public schools.

On the other side of my State, in Spokane, a 28-year teaching veteran says strengthening public education is the best thing we can do for schools like hers that are located in a high-poverty district.

In Prosser, a public school teacher and a former lawyer told me that he is committed to both the public education system and the Constitution. He called the nomination of Betsy DeVos an affront to both, given what he called her track record of undermining public schools and the need for separation of church and State. He said that only through access to high-quality learning opportunities can we remain free.

I heard from a teacher—also a parent—from Issaquah who said: “This nomination is very disappointing.” In order to “make America great again” she said we need fully funded schools for teachers who have the time and the resources to prepare students to be life-long learners.

In Monroe, WA, a teacher for 35 years says she is afraid of what DeVos could mean to public education.

From Camano Island, a retired teacher of 31 years said all children deserve the same access to high-quality public education.

A teacher from Vancouver School District tells me that our public schools deserve better than someone who has called them a dead end, adding that the Secretary of Education should be an advocate for the principle of free, quality, and equal education. She worries that if we don't defend public education from the views of Mrs. DeVos, then we have failed the future of this democracy.

I received a succinct message from Dave in Seattle, in all caps, where he writes: “ABSOLUTELY NO.”

Those are just a few of the many, many people I am hearing from. There are literally thousands and thousands more. I know that is true from all of our colleagues here. Why? Because people are making their voices heard loud and clear. They want a Secretary of Education with real experience in public schools who is truly dedicated to strengthening our public education system across the country.

I am proud to stand with my constituents and the public school educators from Washington State to urge our colleagues to vote no on Betsy DeVos.

We have had a good number of Senators here today to talk about this. I know we are going to be spending Monday, Monday afternoon, into the night Monday, Tuesday morning hearing from many other Senators and having a very robust debate.

I hope that all of those who are listening, and everyone in this country, stands up at this time and thinks about what public education means to this freedom and this democracy, and I know they will, as they have been continuing to let their voices be heard by their elected representatives.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO REAR ADMIRAL CRAIG FALLER

Mr. KING. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate RADM Craig Faller on his outstanding service to our Nation as the Navy's chief of legislative affairs from June 2014 through January 2017. During that time, he was the Navy's lead advocate on Capitol Hill and had the challenging job of communicating with all 535 Members of Congress, handling their constituent inquiries, and properly representing the Navy while taking into account military, political, and budgetary priorities.

Admiral Faller selflessly devoted the last 2 and a half years of his life to ensuring our Nation's sailors were represented in Congress, and he excelled in that role. He established warm and lasting relationships with my colleagues, garnering respect and admiration in both Chambers of Congress and on both sides of the aisle. He worked with us to establish the first-ever Senate Navy Caucus and broadened the Navy's outreach beyond members of defense committees. His efforts, along with those of the Chief of Naval Operations, introduced the Navy to Senators who would not otherwise have had exposure to the great work our sailors are doing around the globe.

On behalf of my colleagues and the U.S. Congress, I thank Admiral Faller for his dedicated service to the Navy and our Nation. I also thank his wife, Martha, for her support and sacrifice. I wish them fair winds and following seas as he moves on to his next assignment as the senior military assistant to the Secretary of Defense.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:57 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by